

# Commission on Streamlining Government

Senator Jack Donahue, *Chairman*  
Roy O. Martin, *Vice Chair*  
Angele Davis, Commissioner of  
Administration  
Barry Erwin  
Brett F. Geymann, Representative  
Leonel Hardman  
John Kennedy, State Treasurer  
Lansing Kolb  
Mike Michot, Senator  
Jim Morris, Representative



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**Commission Staff**  
Jerry J. Guillot, *Administrator*  
Tim Prather, *Coordinator*  
Trudy Fourmy, *Secretary*

## LISTENING TOUR MINUTES

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

4:00 p.m.

Alexandria City Council Chambers

915 Third Street

Alexandria, Louisiana 71301

**DATE APPROVED: October 27, 2009**

### I. CALL TO ORDER

A Listening Tour of the Commission on Streamlining Government was held on Tuesday, September 29, 2009, in the Alexandria City Council Chambers, Alexandria, Louisiana. Senator Donahue, Chairman, called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m.. The chair dispensed with roll call and the secretary noted attendance as follows:

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Jack Donahue  
Representative Jim Morris  
Angele Davis, Comm. of Administration  
Leonel Hardman  
Roy Martin

#### MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Brett Geymann  
State Treasurer John Kennedy  
Barry Erwin  
Lansing Kolb  
Senator Mike Michot

#### INVITED LEGISLATORS/GUESTS

Rep. Christopher Roy  
Rep. Herbert Dixon  
Evans Spiceland

#### STAFF PRESENT

Tim Prather, Coordinator  
Trudy Fourmy, Secretary

#### WITNESSES PRESENT:

Paul Wilson, Local 3803, Corrections employee  
Omatu Barraka, AFSCME  
Stephen Thompson, CLSH  
Edward Worsham, tax payer  
Pat Jones, Council on Aging

Cleveland Lamar Ritchie, tax payer  
Buddy Holston, AFSCME/CLSH  
James E. Ray, Sr., State Employees

## **WITNESSES PRESENT (Continued)**

Zane Parham, Self

A. W. Buie, Jr., Council on Aging

Leona Venson, Fed. of Teachers

Ina LaBorde, AFSCME C-17

Senator Donahue explained the purpose for the creation of the Streamlining Government Commission and stressed that public input on what was important to them should be heard; thus the reason for the listening tour. He stated that a plan would be formulated and brought back to the people after the first of the year to let them see what decisions were made and why they were made. At the future tour, the public will be allowed to participate and that the public's help will be needed to get the plan passed, as it will be a difficult plan. Senator Donahue then introduced the panel members present. Before calling up anyone to speak, he announced that time for speaking would be limited to five minutes and perhaps if there were multiple people representing a certain group, to get a spokesperson within that group so there will not be duplication of efforts.

## **II. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Paul Wilson, a member of AFSME, testified first. His concern was privatization and stated that it was very detrimental to state employees. He asked that the panel look at factors, such as early retirement, etc. If administrations are allowed to make the cuts, the cuts will come from state employees. Cuts need to come from where the fat is and that is at the top. Mr. Martin stated that one of his main questions was the supervisor to employee ratio. He added that they were aware of the layers of management. Mr. Hardman commented that input was needed from the taxpayers of La. and the state employees. He agreed that if cuts were going to be made, it should start at the top because the biggest problem was not individuals at the bottom, but those people entrusted with the budget, the ones making six figures.

James Ray came forward to say that he was a state employee at the Louisiana Special Education Center and that streamlining was just another form of downsizing and that outsourcing was another term for privatizing. If privatizing is done, all that will be done is the transfer of state property and their enterprises to a service of private ownership. There will still be bills to pay and that this was a form of legalizing looping of public assets. The biggest cost is labor and if privatized, it will not be about cost saving but cost shifting. When an administrator has an administrator and a secretary has a secretary, that gets to be too much. At his place of employment, there is a superintendent that makes good money because the state wants good quality people, yet the employees such as himself that takes care of the patient totally should be quality and should be paid as such. He asked the panel to look at the fact that there is a superintendent and a board of special education and then a coordinator and a director and two administrators. Senator Donahue relayed that no one on the commission necessarily thought that money would be saved with privatization, as some things work with it and some do not. Mr. Martin stated that in some cases state employees have formed to make a business to take over certain contracts. Mr. Hardman added that a feasibility study would be required. Rep. Roy stated that all of the panel members did not want to see services cut and agreed to the idea of starting at the top.

Pat Jones, Allen Council on Aging, testified that they were opposed to the proposal to put their council under DHH. They are the closest link to the aging and they have a daily contact with them. They can assess their needs and know what they need and don't need and can save money. They are providing home based services for the aging and think the EVA waiver in DHH should go back to the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs because the waiting list was not as long. Her suggestion was to combine all aging services in the state under the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs.

Buddy Holston, AFSCME, stated that he had read all the material and had listened to everything but had not heard anything about patient and employee care, and all he has heard is about privatization. He thought maybe the governor should run for president and get out of their system. He stated that the governor came to his church and asked for his vote but did not tell him that he would be taking away his job. He also did not tell him about privatization and money, not patient care. He added that everyone knew who the panel was and knew who elected them. Their employees work every day and are good employees who are trained, skilled employees. Every time hospitals or schools take a cut, the employees take the hit. He was sorry that Mr. Kennedy was not present as Mr. Kennedy had also come to his church asking him to vote for him. Senator Donahue stated that it was a difficult job representing the people of Louisiana and he wanted to assure everyone that the commission was not here to cut state jobs, that nothing had been decided, that they were present to listen.

Edward Worsham stepped up to be heard next. He stated that he had problems with all legislators, state and federal, that always hurt the working man. He thought all of them should go back into their districts and see what the people thought about what they were doing. He thought that paid lobbyists should be done away with and that they should vote the way their constituents wanted them to vote.

Cleveland Ritchie was next to testify. He was concerned with middle management and thought that it was the place to begin cuts. He then discussed Central Louisiana State Hospital and the management of it. He thought that the best way to help the education system was to get rid of the state education system and then get rid of the federal system. The way the systems are running, their job is to push children forward, not hold them back.

Stephen Thompson testified that he worked at the state hospital and his concern was that in the past they had been downsized and a lot of the patients were walking the streets and lived under bridges. He gave a story of his own personal experience. The patient is always the one to suffer the most and they are not able to speak for themselves.

Zane Parham asked if there was privatization, would it be a Louisiana company. When Governor Jindal was running for office, he took outside donations to his campaign to raise a lot of money and he was wondering if that outside source would get the contract. Senator Donahue answered that since privatization had not been discussed or who might be interested, he could not answer the question. Mr. Parham stated that Mr. Martin had stated earlier that outsourcing would be cheaper. Mr. Martin answered that he had stated that it may be "potentially" cheaper and that it would have to be looked at. He added that in some cases insourcing may be cheaper. Mr. Parham stated that it may be cheaper, but the state

employees may not be able to find jobs and it will cost a lot of money for unemployment benefits. He had recently been laid off and is not able to find a job, even though he is a younger man with experience. He did not see how outsourcing could be potentially cheaper if a lot of people would be laid off to draw unemployment. He stated that he would prefer to pay more taxes rather than go through layoffs. Senator Donahue explained that they understood how difficult this was for everyone but that the commission was not looking into wholesale layoffs across the state. He acknowledged that there had been rumors of cutting 5,000 employees every year for 3 years, but that it was only one person talking on his own and that it had not come up before the commission to be evaluated.

Omatu Barraka with AFSCME testified that he worked at Huey P. Long Psych Unit and that they were concerned about the layoff of employees. He remembered when having a state job was a good thing, but now people take a state job just as a stepping stone to a higher paying position. He added that their unit is always short of employees and that what they did could not be privatized. He asked that when cuts were made, not to cut staff, to cut the fat. He reminded everyone that the previous governor did a lot and we weren't a billion dollars in the red and that with the current governor, we are in the red. Senator Donahue and Mr. Martin discussed the salary of classified workers and how the salaries were not competitive with private industry and they thought they should be realigned.

Leona Venson, Rapides Federation of Teachers, made comments regarding teachers and school employees. She wanted to voice her concerns about privatization. She said that privatization would start with one group and trickle to others. She stated that their education system had already been cut. She thought it would be better to let community people do the work and keep their jobs. She asked the panel to continue to hear them and look at the suggestions they had made.

Ina LaBorde, AFCME C-17, spoke earlier with some of the panel before the meeting and appreciated all their comments. She asked to address some issues to Mr. Martin since he was handling privatization. She stated that she regretted that Mr. Kennedy was not present but that he was like a runaway freight train. She could not understand how someone could say that to people who go to work everyday under the conditions they work under. She wanted to know how Mr. Kennedy could face people all over the state. She remembered when Governor Roemer felt he had to "gut" central Louisiana. She wanted everyone to understand that she would be working the session and that if privatization regarding in-patient mental health should come up, she would be there to mobilize the masses to come see them. She reminded everyone that they were fighting for survival and that the message today was small and that there was a lot more to say and it would be said where it counts. She reminded the panel that they had been threatened if they went to the capitol to talk to their own legislators. She considered this moment as their chance to speak up. She asked that Mr. Martin include in his look at privatization, the calculation of all the buildings that the state owns and has to maintain. She stated that she appreciated everyone on the panel and wanted to work with them but they should not forget today because they needed them.

Senator Donahue reiterated the deficit the state would be facing and that the commission would help decide where the money would come from. Mr. Hardman expressed his

appreciation for the group speaking today and thought that the cuts should start at the top. Mr. Martin discussed reimbursements of Medicare since Katrina.

Rep. Dixon stated that he wanted to thank Rep. Morris and Senator Donahue for having the meetings and stated that fairness would be the key. He assured everyone that fairness will rule the day and that some had been harsh on the governor, but that the governor had visited everyone and that they should be fair with him.

Rep. Ray stated that he votes on the budget but reminded everyone that he only had one vote but that he would look at excess. He closed by saying that the patients at Huey P. Long were receiving excellent care.

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business to discuss, the commission adjourned at approximately 5:25 p.m.

October 27, 2009

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DATE APPROVED

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Jack Donahue, Chair